

ARAB-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE

Overview

- Define Arab-American
- Describe the origins of Arab-American
- Define the different types of immigration
- Discuss the Arab-American family structure and customs
- Define Islam
- Define Muslim

Arab-Americans

The term Arab-American is given to persons who immigrated to the United States from a group of independent nation-states on North Africa and the Middle East.

Demographics

- 2.5 to 3 million some estimate nearly 5 million
- Majority Christian 70% Muslim 30%
- Majority settled in: New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, Washington, DC, Houston, Chicago, and Jacksonville

Immigration

- Early Immigration-1886-1914
- Most came from greater Syria: Libya, Palestine, Jordan, and Iran
- Majority poor, uneducated and had a distaste for factory work
- Many were slaves on plantations, others were traders, peddlers, farmers
- Immigration slowed during 1915-1945 due to immigration laws
- After 1945 the immigrants were more educated, professional, and mainly of the Muslim faith

Family Structure

- Father- head of family, provider
- Mother- primary responsibility of raising the children
 - caring for the house
 - arrange marriages(going away)
 - consulted for decisions
- Sons- taught to be protectors, help the father
- Daughters- taught to be the source of love and support for the family, helping mother
- Family members, relatives, friends, and neighbors share in taking care of children, help instill values

Customs

- Conservative Behavior
 - no display of affection in public
- Non-Confrontational
 - private arguments
- Save Face Concept
 - avoid embarrassing
- Privacy
 - Can not see in neighbors house from any part of house

Customs

- Greetings

- Don't enter house until invited, don't greet with a kiss, hand shake if extended, normally words, no compliments for others wife, sister, or daughter on their beauty

- Admiring Objects and Gift giving

- Don't admire a possession of an Arab, they may feel obligated to give it to you, don't open gifts in front of giver

- Women's Clothing

- most very conservative

What is Islam?

- Simply means “submission” derives from the word “peace”
- Religious context means complete submission to God “Allah”
- Both a religion and way of life
- Islam and Christianity have the same origin, Abraham, three prophets directly descended from Mohammed from the eldest, Ishmael, and Moses and Jesus from Isaac.

Who are Muslims

- Approximately one billion people believe in
 - One, Unique, Incomparable God
 - In the Angels created by Him
 - In the Prophets through whom His revelations were brought
 - In the Day of Judgment and individual accountability for actions
 - In God's complete authority over human destiny and in life after death
 - God's final message to man was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed through Gabriel
 - "Fatalism" self reliance vs. God's will

Islam and Muslim

- One can become a Muslim simply by saying
 - “there is no god apart from God, and Mohammed is the Messenger of God”
- What is the Koran?
 - A record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the prophet
 - Not one word of the 114 chapters has changed over 14 centuries
 - Primary source of every Muslim's faith and practice

What do Muslims Think About Jesus

- Muslim's respect and revere Jesus, they await his second coming
- Considered one of the greatest messengers
- Never referred to simply as Jesus always and the phrase "upon him be peace"
- Mary is considered the purest women of all creation

Five Pillars of Islam

- Faith- no God worthy of worship except God, Mohammed is his messenger
- Prayer- Five times a day, dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and nightfall, may pray anywhere Mosque, face Mecca
- The Zakat- means purification and growth, all things belong to God, involves payment of 2.5% of ones capital
- Ramadan- the fast, one month, first light till sundown, self purification
- Pilgrimage- Makkah (Mecca) the homeland, once during a life time

Islam and Muslim

- Muslim Women

- Single or married they are an individual in her own right, with the right to own and dispose of her property

- Marriage

- A simple legal agreement either partner can include conditions
- Women moves to husband's home, son may move to own house as long as one son is still home to care for parents
- Bride keeps her family name
- Divorce is not common, to get a divorce a man says: "I divorce you" three times, women must go to court, man always get kids

Contemporary Issues

- Arab-Israeli Conflict
- American Role in the Middle East
- Kuwait
- Discrimination in the United States

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